

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraphs beginning at page 3, line 28 as follows:

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a buffer unit for ~~fragmenting variable-length packets into~~ processing fixed-length packets ~~for that have been fragmented from variable-length packets,~~ said processing being performed in units of fixed-length packets, comprising a fixed-length packet storing means ~~for storing~~ part configured to store the fixed-length packets for each of a plurality of output paths, a multicasting processing means ~~for storing~~ part configured to store multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations, and ~~transferring to transfer~~ the multicasting packets to the fixed-length packet storing ~~means~~ part depending on the plurality of destinations, and a control means ~~part~~ for monitoring a storage state of the fixed-length packet storing ~~part means,~~ and ~~carrying to carry~~ out a control so that the multicasting packets are transferred within a variable-length packet formed by a plurality of fixed-length packets. According to the buffer unit of the present invention, it is possible to avoid the frame interleaving from being generated by appropriately controlling the timing of the multicasting processing means.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a buffer unit for ~~fragmenting variable-length packets into~~ processing fixed-length packets ~~for that have been fragmented from variable-length packets,~~ said processing being performed in units of fixed-length packets, comprising a fixed-length packet storing part means, including first and second packet storing sections, ~~for storing~~ configured to store the fixed-length packets for each of output paths, a multicasting processing part configured to store means ~~for storing~~ multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations, and to transfer ~~transferring~~ the multicasting packets to the second packet storing section depending on the plurality of destinations, and a control part configured to

monitor ~~means for monitoring~~ a storage state of one of the first and second packet storing sections, and to carry ~~carrying~~ out a control so that reading from the first and second packet storing sections is switched in units of a variable-length packet which is formed by a plurality of fixed-length packets. According to the buffer unit of the present invention, it is possible to avoid the frame interleaving from being generated by appropriately switching the reading from the first and second packet storing sections.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a buffer unit for processing ~~fragmenting variable-length packets into~~ fixed-length packets ~~for that have been fragmented from variable-length packets, said processing being performed~~ in units of fixed-length packets, comprising a temporary storing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ the fixed-length packets and to output ~~outputting~~ a plurality of fixed-length packets forming a single variable-length packet after the plurality of fixed-length packets are received, a fixed-length packet storing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ the plurality of fixed-length packets output from the temporary storing ~~means~~ part for each of a plurality of output paths, and a multicasting processing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations, and to transfer ~~transferring~~ the multicasting packets to the fixed-length packet storing means depending on the plurality of destinations. According to the buffer unit of the present invention, it is possible to avoid the frame interleaving from being generated by appropriately controlling the storage to the temporary storing means and the fixed-length packet storing means.

~~Still another object of the present invention is to provide a buffer unit for fragmenting variable-length packets into fixed-length packets for processing in units of fixed-length packets, comprising a packet storing means for storing the fixed-length packets, fixed-length packet~~

~~storing means for storing stored addresses of the fixed-length packets for each of output paths, multicasting processing means for storing stored addresses of multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations, and transferring virtual addresses corresponding to the stored addresses of the multicasting packets to the fixed-length packet storing means depending on the plurality of destinations, and queue length managing means for managing a first sum total of a number of addresses and a number of virtual addresses stored in the fixed-length packet storing means for each of the output paths, and a second sum total of the number of addresses and a number of the addresses of the multicasting packets, where the first sum total is used for packet cancel control, the second sum total is used for packet contention control. According to the buffer unit of the present invention, it is possible to efficiently utilize the buffer capacity and carry out accurate packet cancel control and packet contention control.~~

A further object of the present invention is to provide a buffer unit for processing ~~fragmenting variable-length packets into fixed-length packets for~~ that have been fragmented from variable-length packets, said processing being performed in units of fixed-length packets, comprising a first storing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ the fixed-length packets, and to output ~~outputting~~ a plurality of fixed-length packets forming a single variable-length packet when the plurality of fixed-length packets are received, a second storing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ the plurality of fixed-length packets output from the first storing part ~~means~~ for each of a plurality of output paths, a multicasting processing part configured to store ~~means for storing~~ multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations, and to transfer ~~transferring~~ the multicasting packets to the second storing section depending on the plurality of destinations, where outputs of the first storing part ~~means~~ and the multicasting processing part ~~means~~ are switched in units of a variable-length packet which is formed by a plurality of fixed-length

packets. According to the buffer unit of the present invention, it is possible to avoid the frame interleaving from being generated.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a switching apparatus for ~~fragmenting variable-length packets into~~ processing fixed-length packets that have been fragmented from variable-length packets, said ~~for processing being performed~~ in units of fixed-length packets, comprising an input buffer section receiving multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations or unicasting packets having a single destination, a switching section switching the multicasting packets or the unicasting packets received from the input buffer section depending on the destination of each packet, and an output buffer section receiving fixed-length packets from the switching section depending on output paths, and defragmenting the fixed-length packets into the variable-length packets, wherein the input buffer section outputs a plurality of fixed-length packets in units of a variable-length packet which is formed by a plurality of fixed-length packets. According to the switching apparatus of the present invention, it is possible to avoid the frame interleaving from being generated.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 7 as follows:

Normally, one frame is made up of a plurality of packets, and it takes time until the packets amounting to one frame are stored in the packet buffer section 21. For example, it is assumed for the sake of convenience that one unicasting frame made up of five ~~multicasting~~ unicasting packets arrives at the buffer unit. FIG. 3(a) shows a state where the write addresses of the three unicasting packets which have already arrived are stored in the output queue (VOQ#0) 28-1. In this state, the write addresses of the multicasting packets amounting to one multicasting frame are already stored in the copy queue (COPY) 29.